

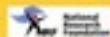
Art on our Mind



Lallitha Jawahirilal, *Makebelieve and poetry of passion* (n.d.)

Reshma Chhiba

Creative dialogue | 27 October 4pm-6pm
Common Room | English Department | Drostdy Road





Art on our Mind Creative Dialogue

with

Reshma Chhiba

in conversation with Nontobeko Ntombela

27 October 2017

Department of English Seminar Room, Rhodes University, Grahamstown

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****Dialogue begins****

(00:08)

Sharlene Khan: "Okay, welcome everyone and thank you for coming. We know it's the last bit of the year so we weren't expecting a very large audience, but we are glad to have this conversation because it will be available online and is part of the kinda historical document trace that we are trying to do. And thank you for doing this on such short notice. So it gives me great pleasure to welcome back to the hot seat Nontobeko, our illustrious *Art on our Mind* associate and Reshma Chhiba. Reshma is a visual artist and also a curator, sort of, and definitely a performer, and she runs a dance company. She is involved in Bharatanatyam dance and we will explore that a bit more. But in particular also, having this particular conversation between Reshma and Nonto because it is, what we are basically doing is dropping in on a conversation between two people who have had a very long-standing conversation around curatorship, around her practice and also the kinds of entanglements of how do we situate identities within black

feminism as well. And so we are really happy to be part of this conversation, this dialogue that's happening between you. So thank you very much again and I will hand over to Nonto, of course, who has curated several times in participation and collaboration with Reshma. And you can just look at me for some visual clues for timing, so when we have to cut to the next part. Thank you."

(01:51)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Okay thank you Sharlene for introducing the framework of today and, of course, for allowing I suppose us to have a conversation and continue the conversation that we have been having for a number of years. With me I have questions that I have not generated, but the research team of *Art on our Mind* that have generated, so our conversation is going to be slightly different to what we normally have. So to start off, the first question that I have here is where were you born and what did your parents do for a living?"

(02:31)

Reshma Chhiba: "So I was born in Springs, but I grew up in Benoni. My mom was, and still is, a bookkeeper and my dad worked in construction."

(02:45)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "You were raised in Johannesburg. Where did you go to school and what influence did that have on you accessing art?"

(02:55)

Reshma Chhiba: "So I was specifically raised in Benoni, which is a very different place to Johannesburg, which is just east of Johannesburg. I went to school in Benoni - I went to Benoni Primary School - which was predominantly Indian and then went to Benoni High, which was a then Model C school, which had access to art as a subject, which I didn't have before, you wouldn't find it in Indian schools, Indian high schools, so that really helped in peaking my interest in pursuing a career in the arts."

(03:32)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "How did you encounter art or what kind of creativities did you grow up with?"

(03:39)

Reshma Chhiba: "So I've always been someone who was interested in painting and drawing from a very young age, but I think my first encounter with anything creative was dance¹, which I started at the age of five, sorry eight *[laughs]*. I'm thinking of my five-year olds. *[laughs]* At the age of eight, ja, and I haven't stopped dancing since. That was really the first moment I encountered anything embedded in creativity and it really did influence how I navigated the world and engaged with art and conversation and people and it really is a part of who I am."

(04:26)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "So you studied for your BFA [Bachelor of Fine Arts] at Wits [University of the Witwatersrand] and then went on to do your Masters [in Fine Arts] there as well. Can you tell us about your studying experiences?"

(04:38)

Reshma Chhiba: "Ja, I did both my undergrad and postgraduate at Wits. It was..., I don't know if I was that engaged at that time? Let's say that if I had to redo it, I would do it very differently and I don't know if I would choose Wits as the place to want to do my degrees, especially my postgraduate. So it was something that I went through, I enjoyed it. My postgraduate I didn't feel that I had the guidance that I needed. It is something that if I had the opportunity I would redo, definitely, and work with people that inspired me more. So it was both enjoyable and something that I sort of went through."

(05:34)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Maybe tell us a little about the trajectory since then?"

(05:38)

¹ Chhiba has studied Bharatanatyam dancing for 27 years, and began to teach it in 2002.

Reshma Chhiba: "Okay so when I was busy with my Masters, I was selected by the Goethe [Institute in Johannesburg] to work at *documenta*, so spent about four months at *documenta*¹². And then just before that, applied for a post at JAG [Johannesburg Art Gallery] and got the post, but they waited for four months for me to come back. And then started immediately at JAG as Exhibitions Curator, and then as Registrar and then spent about six years there, died a little bit, that's where we met [*laughing*]. And fought a lot with you, and then went on to UJ [University of Johannesburg], encountered racism and then ended up back at Wits. That's where I have been so far." [*laughing*]

(06:30)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Funny you speak about our fights, not to be shared here. Back to the questions. What were your earlier experiences as an art graduate potentially thinking about becoming an artist?"

(06:45)

Reshma Chhiba: "It's weird because I don't think I was ever one of those artists or students who were engaged by lecturers as someone who would make it as an artist, so it wasn't something that ever seemed possible for me. I don't know if it is still possible, I don't know if I am a practicing artist, it's something that I am trying to be."

(07:08)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I'm trying not to get into a fight here." [*laughter*]

(07:13)

Reshma Chhiba: "So what is the question again?" [*laughter*]

(07:18)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What were your experiences as an art graduate and potentially thinking about becoming an artist?"

(07:23)

jReshma Chhiba: "Ja, I think it's one of those things where you almost automatically end up in some form of administrative role, and your art, or your practice is this thing that you do on the side, which is still something that seems to happen as much as for me it is still in the forefront of what I do. But it's still... you know, you have to pay bills so you have to get a job, and it's always the thing that you are trying to do and not sleep and get that done instead."

(07:54)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I want to probe other questions, but I will hold my questions later. Currently you are the Exhibitions Coordinator at the Wits The Point of Order [Gallery], but in the past you've worked as a Curatorial Intern at *documenta* in 2007 and then later joined, as you have mentioned, Exhibitions Curator at JAG and later as a Registrar. And now you are also part of the Sarvavidya Natyaalaya dance [company as a Bharatanatyam dancer]. How have you managed to maintain all these different roles of being visual artist, curator and performer? And maybe can you expand a bit about the variety of choices that you've made, the kinds of choices you've made around these positions."

(08:50)

Reshma Chhiba: "Okay, so the *documenta* thing wasn't actually a curatorial internship, it was more an 'art mediator', which is like a glorified tour guide [*laughter*] - an English-speaking tour guide. And Exhibitions Coordinator at JAG is very similar to what I do at The Point of Order, just on a much smaller scale, and with no budget, not that there really was a budget at JAG. And I think how I maintain these things is I don't, I think I struggle to maintain these various things that I do, but it's stuff that I've always wanted to, so I want to pursue a visual art career, I want to pursue a dance career but for me those two are synonymous, they are not separate things, whereas to everyone else they seem as separate things. To you they seem as these two different masks and two different worlds that I engage and two different people that I become, but they are the same for me. And then the work at the Point of Order is work that I enjoy doing, but it also pays the bills."

(10:01)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Okay now we are going to interject. But I'm interested in this idea of the two masks that we've always spoken about. Perhaps, I think, for the benefit of the audience here, explain how they have at times grown apart and at times come together, and whether you have seen them as always being part of one of the same things. How has that evolved in your work?"

(10:31)

Reshma Chhibha: "So I mean, I think at one stage before I had started my own [Bharatanatyam] school², it was always separate. It was always something that I tried to pursue in my visual art practice especially as an undergrad, but never quite successfully, I don't think so. And it was only when I started my own school with my partners³ that it became something that I saw as synonymous with my practice as a visual artist. And I suppose because having my own school allowed me to work conceptually with the things that I wanted to and I was already working conceptually with things that I wanted to in my visual art practice, so it just made sense that they came together."

(11:17)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Can maybe you tell us a little bit about your dancing partner Anusha Pillay, and the dance that you both run, dance company."

(11:29)

Reshma Chhibha: "So I initially, we learnt from the same teacher whose from India, and then our teacher moved over to the [United] States and then I actually continued my learning from Anusha. So she is always seen as a mentor, teacher figure to me, but she is also someone that I collaborate with in my visual art practice, so I photographed her since 2004 and is someone who I continuously photograph in my work. And then we obviously work together with performances and choreography, and we run the school together, and conceptualise and fight."

(12:12)

² Sarvavidya Natyaalaya, co-founded in 2010 by Anusha Pillay, Panna Dulabh and Reshma Chhibha in Lenasia.

³ Anusha Pillay and Panna Dulabh.

Nontobeko Ntombela: "You like fighting. *[laughter]* Kali, the yoni, Bharatanatyam are a recurring motif in your work, can you tell us the meaning of these symbols in your work and the evolution has placed in your practice."

(12:28)

Reshma Chhibha: "So Kali really is someone I 'discovered' in 2004 when I was doing my undergrad and was interested in a range of things. But the one thing that was always at the forefront was the position of women, at that time particularly Indian women, and Kali just came forward as this figure who was outside of all of that, yet comes from that space, so she is for me defiance. And so in my work and in my research, I have continuously used her as this. She becomes, the motif of her is actually the motif of defiance, which comes through in various forms, from swords to yonis. So ja, that's really how she starts to develop in my work."

(13:33)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Before I move on to asking you more questions about Kali, perhaps maybe you can take us through your work."

****Powerpoint projected on screen of Reshma's artwork and videos****

(13:31)

Reshma Chhibha: "Sure. This is a work that really, this was a work that I did at my undergrad in 2003.⁴ It's an untitled, it's a still from the video - the video is on the next slide. I don't know if people have seen it. So the work itself, without over-explaining it because I have a tendency to do this and Nonto always fights with me about over-explaining. It obviously features our Bharatanatyam dancer, that's my teacher and a woman who uses sign language. And they both are telling the same story and the story is about... I usually, I haven't said this before, publically, but I think it's okay for me to tell it. The story is about a rape, and they both telling the same story using an unspoken language, but you have no access to it and that's the point and they are repeating the story, continuing the story. My point is that these stories are being told but no-one is hearing it. And that's all I've got to say about it. But why I chose to start with this work

⁴ Chhibha is referring to her work *Untitled* (2003), see Fig.1.

because it is really from this moment that I started making work that was about something that I wanted to talk about, so it was important for me because it was the shifting moment in my practice. These are just works on the side which are my mother's and grandmother's sarees that have been worn with use, which I then just bound frames in and stitched through it, so it is one of the materials that come up constantly in my practice.⁵ So the motif of the tongue is also something that comes up continuously, especially when I was working on my Kali project from 2004 to 2008. But the pigments that I used are all earth-based, and I use a lot of stitching in the work so the paintings, the previous one with the tongue has a feeling of blood⁶, which is closely related to Kali herself. This is the only painted portrait of Kali, which Nonto owns.⁷ And then swords are another, sorry it's quite dark here, is another motif that comes up consistently in the work, and these are the things that she holds in her hands, so the swords, the flowers, the tongue. These all become metaphoric of Kali and her defiance in various ways on these large abstracted canvases. And then that's where the dance comes in, so I always imagine this as the goddess entering the battleground and her war cry in a sense, quite a silent one but this is also when I was working with Anusha the very first time we were photographing just black and white photographs.⁸ If you move to the next one, there is a series of where we just moved through this woman who... so she's married and she lives in this space where she goes through various stages of being in this marriage with her husband and, eventually, moves to a space of defiance and fighting back.⁹ And using all the different motifs and mudras that come through dance to eventually become a goddess-like figure where her hair is unbound and she pushes beyond what is expected of her. You can move to the next one. This is a series that looks particularly at hair and it's relation to sexuality according to a text¹⁰ that I found around in my research on Kali, which looks at the young girl whose hair is plaited, which talks about her unawakened sexuality and then the married woman whose hair is in a bun and talks about the restraint of the sexuality.¹¹ And if we move to the next slide, the widow whose hair is stripped and, in a sense, this complete stripping of her dignity, of herself.¹² And then the fourth one is my inclusion,

⁵ Chhiba is referring to her work *Revolt* (2004), see Fig.2.

⁶ Chhiba is referring to the work *Rubella* (2004), see Fig.3.

⁷ *Portrait of Kālī* (2008), see Fig.4.

⁸ Chhiba is referring to her work *Kalika* (2008), see Fig.7.

⁹ Chhiba is referring to her work *Kali Tandava* (2008), see Fig.8.

¹⁰ Seema Mohanty (2004) *The Book of Kali*.

¹¹ Chhiba is referring to her works *Unawakened* (2008) and *Restrained* (2008), see Figs. 9 & 10.

¹² Chhiba is referring to her work *Stripped* (2008), see Fig. 11.

which is Kali's wild hair, the unbridledness and the untamedness of her sexuality.¹³ This is just me playing around, it's called *Child Kali* and it was with a family member and she just sat there pulling these funny faces, but there's two in fact, I only showed one here.¹⁴ So the one, her hair is quite wild and then the other one her tongue is all over the place, so I thought it was quite a nice, playful reflection on Kali as a possible child figure. This is *Linga-Yoni*, it's a tongue, which I suppose can read as many things and protrudes from the wall.¹⁵"

(19:57)

Sharlene Khan: "What are those other things?"

(20:00)

Reshma Chhibba: *[laughing]* "Wow, I'm not going to say." *[laughter]*

(20:03)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "You are up to something Sharlene." *[laughter]*

(20:07)

Reshma Chhibba: "This is from the latest project, *The Two Talking Yonis* project,¹⁶ and this is one of the... well, it's part of a version of what I've seen as a goddess, of course with my additions, so again the sari appears but the material is still the same, it's still the thread and the kum kum powder.¹⁷ But of course here there is this bleeding that happens naturally outside of the surface of the figure itself, which is unintended but I think adds to the work. And then this series is *Dasa Mahavidyas (The Ten Transcendental Wisdoms)* series¹⁸ which is the ten transcendental pearl wisdoms of Kali or ten transcendental wisdoms, and basically it relates back to a... I found a folk theatre called Mudi yettu, which is from Kerala, where male dancers enact the role of Kali to invoke her, but women are not allowed to do this and they not allowed in the space where this invocation is happening because it's believed that their energy is too heightened and they may

¹³ Chhibba is referring to her work *Unbridled* (2008), see Fig. 12.

¹⁴ Chhibba is referring to her works *Child Kali* (year).

¹⁵ Chhibba is referring to her work *Linga-yoni* (2009), see Fig.14.

¹⁶ *The Two Talking Yonis* (2013)

¹⁷ Chhibba is referring to her work *Sublime Essence* (2013), see Fig.15.

¹⁸ Chhibba is referring to her works *The Power of Time* (2013) and *The Unsatisfied Desire* (2013), see Figs. 16 & 17.

become too fierce in this space. So I used a female dancer to enact these ten versions of Kali and the tongue that she wears around her waist - that happens in all the images - is relating back to this folk theatre, in which the male dancer wears a tongue around his waist, almost acting as an exaggerated phallus. So in this sense, I wanted it to be on the female body an exaggerate a clitoris. And then here, this is the widow and, again, the widow is a figure that does reappear sometimes in my work, but it stands erect here and the idea is, I mean these things happened, sometimes they happen naturally, sometimes it was forced.¹⁹ This happened quite naturally that it did that. *[laughing]* I suppose it was the way it was tied. But again the widow is seen as a figure who is without power, without dignity within traditional Hindu communities. Because she does not have a husband, she is denied certain... what happened there? She is denied certain rights and she is seen as this bad omen, but the erect clitoris for me gives her power. And then this is *Come Inside*, which I presume we are going to talk about (laughing) so..."²⁰

(22:56)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Should I maybe ask further questions before we go there? Now this is the tongue twisting moment for me. *(laughing)* This is a trick for me from the group, I suspect. *(laughter)* Since Kali is one of the ten Mahavidyas, which combines the Sakta and Buddhist goddesses. Why the focus on Kali and not Adya Shakti, who you have noted also shows her vulva, and why not choose other goddesses such as *(laughter)* Tara, Tripura Sundari, Bhuvaneshvari, Bhairavi, Chhinnamasta. This is a trick you guys. *(laughter)* This is where my Indian knowledge goes out of the window. *(laughter)* Bagalamukhi and Kamala. So why not choose these goddesses as part of your work?"

(24:00)

Reshma Chhiba: "So they're all the same, right? It's just one. For me it's just one being and Kali was the first one that I encountered. Sometimes I talk about her as a person, sometimes I talk about her as an energy, sometimes I talk about her as myself. So for me, it is always Kali. These names that you mentioned, these are manifestations of her or manifestations of Adya Shakti, manifestations of Parvati, they are manifestations of any goddess. I choose Kali because I have

¹⁹ Chhiba is referring to her work *The Unsatisfied Desire* (2013), see Fig.17.

²⁰ *Come Inside* (2013), see Figs. 18 – 20.

always chosen Kali and I'll always choose Kali. These represent different modes of her transformation, the various things that she does, the various roles that she has - so Nonto is a mother, she's a friend, she's a sister, she's a daughter. So is Kali in these different modes."

(24:59)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Kali comes from the Sanskrit word 'Kala' or 'Kal' which means time, describing her main purpose as one who presides over time. Now while the root of the name means 'time' in Sanskrit, the word 'Kali' itself in Gujarat means 'black'. What role does this concept of time play in your work, and can you explain a bit more about the meaning or significance of the meaning of Kali as black in your work."

(25:30)

Reshma Chhiba: "Yeah, so both meanings are synonymous with her. She is both the one who presides over time and she is black. So she is black physically, but for me she starts to then shift how I navigate myself, my blackness as a person in contemporary South Africa. So for me she does that, she becomes more human in that way because she starts shifting that space of how we look at race, how Indians look at other Indians who are darker or lighter. So she does that for me, personally, and in my work I think she is more about transformation really than time and it's about how the female figure is transformed both mentally, physically, spiritually, sexually. All of these things. So that is what she comes to represent for me, but more specifically she represents that defiance, more than time."

(26:28)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Another question which I'm not sure you're going to be comfortable with. What does it mean to be a Kali worshipper, as according to a 2015 article by Professor Nalini Moodley titled 'Exploring goddess, religion and inclusivity within the Hindu community in South Africa'?"

(26:48)

Reshma Chhiba: "Does she call me a Kali worshipper? I don't know, I don't know what it means to be a Kali worshipper. I can't say that I am a Kali worshipper. I connect to her on various levels, not just on a spiritual level.

(27:31)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "In your work you draw on the parallels between mythology and reality. Would you say that your art then attempts to create a new myth?"

(27:46)

Reshma Chhiba: "I don't think it attempts to create a new myth. What it does attempt to do is to present another identity that women could adopt and when I saw women, here the starting point is always speaking from a very particular position having come from an Indian community. So and having been surrounded by these women so that Kali presents a different kind of self that one could be. So not myth but way of being I suppose."

(28:20)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Well I suppose a new voice for yourself I guess."

(28:23)

Reshma Chhiba: "Yeah."

(28:24)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "In your work you employ various media - painting, sculpture, embroidery, photography and drawing. Tell us a bit about why you choose this different medias and what they bring into your work."

(28:38)

Reshma Chhiba: "Well I mean I think it's always about, for me it's never about I want to work in these different media, it's about the idea that I have and so the video that I showed, the best way for me to show what I was trying to show was through video.²¹ So the media presents itself

²¹ Referring to her work *Untitled* (2003).

depending on what the idea is. But to talk specifically about the materials, all the pigment that I use is earth-based, which in some senses and some cultures relates to goddess - earth relates to goddess, so in a way it invokes on that level without sounding too airy fairy about it. The stitching is something that is both aggressive and meditative for me. The notion of penetrating the surface is about aggression, but also is something that for me as I in a sense dance around the canvas becomes quite meditative. The sarees like I said, they are very much about ancestry - they are always sarees that are given to me by women I know, by women I'm familiar with and they are usually worn with use, so worn, as in worn and worn."

(29:59)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Maybe talk a little about the materialities of spice, powders that you use in your work."

(30:05)

Reshma Chhiba: "Ja, so I mean there's turmeric and then there's kum kum, which comes in different shades but I specifically use the maroon and the red because it relates to blood. And it relates... the turmeric itself also relates to goddess worship. I use ash as well. Ash actually relates more to Shiva who is masculine. And coal, again, it's something from earth, and I crush it by hand so all of these processes are important, that its hand crushed coal, it's not coal that I buy crushed. But the blackness of the coal is what's important to me. The ash, it's the smell that triggers something for me, so yeah."

(30:56)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "And this is something that is *really* present in your studio."

(30:59)

Reshma Chhiba: "Yes."

(31:00)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "And where do you start in terms of the way that you engage with this material?"

(31:04)

Reshma Chhibba: "What do you mean where do I start?"

(31:05)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "My sense is that every time I've walked into your studio there's always a sense of something more pertinent and something more stronger than the other. The spices that you use, sometimes you bottle them. I think there's always something fascinating about the processes that you use, maybe expand on that a little bit."

(31:26)

Reshma Chhibba: "I use them in different ways - sometimes I drip glue on and then sift the powder over. Sometimes I mush it on with my hands, sometimes I paint it on with a brush. But it's also that sitting there and crushing and then going home and finding that your face is black and you didn't know your face was black and (*laughing*) you know. It also becomes, again, it does become quite meditative for me, having to sit there and just knock away and crush this coal or smell the ash, which is also ash that is used in ritual. In a sense it becomes a different kind of ritual because I don't necessarily engage in those particular rituals that are Hindu rituals, whatever that means."

(32:23)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Maybe let's get into the *Come Inside* work before I start asking questions about that work."

(32:29)

Reshma Chhibba: "Okay. So yeah, I have just shown two images. The one is the interest, this what at Constitutional Hill Women's Jail and once you were inside and you looked out, you could see the two hidden pockets in this, as it were, as you exit it. And, of course, behind me, we have standing at the moment is this portrait, self-portrait, as Kali.²²"

(33:00)

²² See *I am Kali, I am Black* (2013), Fig.20.

Nontobeko Ntombela: "The setting of this installation was very important. Can you tell us a little bit about this?"

(33:06)

Reshma Chhibi: "Yeah I mean, so how it happened was I had been approached by... well you know that when we sat in the boardroom of JAG eating lunch, we had this long conversation about the possibility of making a massive walk-in vagina. And then we discussed JAG as a possible venue to make this thing, and then we spoke about what happens inside, and then I think somebody said maybe there can be a trampoline or it was like ridiculous things about what could happen inside it. And then you left JAG and abandoned me and my soul died some more, and then I went to UJ searching for something and realised how brown I was. And then, then there was this moment where I decided actually I'm going to do it and Con[stitutional] Hill actually approached me to propose something and it just felt like the right space because it is historically charged, it was a space that many women were persecuted, were violated, were imprisoned.²³ I mean essentially they were imprisoned, but it did many things to women. But also could have been a space of collectivity and thinking about how to come out of that space together. So it was a space of power in a sense and, for me, it was about reclaiming power, reclaiming power in the space of the prison."

(34:44)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "It feels weird asking you these questions"...["because the decisions implicated both of us" – *talking simultaneously with Chhibi*]

(34:46)

Reshma Chhibi: "Because you know the answers. Well yeah, I think also what should be made clear is that this was, this was the starting, the conversation in the JAG board room was the starting of this conversation. Because *The Two Talking Yonis* and *Come Inside* developed as a collective project, as much as it was something I was pushing it with, it was collective in every

²³ Constitutional Hill is an old jail located in Braamfontein in Johannesburg, which housed many anti-apartheid prisoners. It was decommissioned in 1983 and is now a museum and gallery space and the location of the Constitutional Court of South Africa.

sense. It was something that we made decisions around so when I approached you about Con Hill, you said go for it and you know the proposal was written but you had input in that as well, so it wasn't something that was always Reshma. I think it's always been a collective project."

(35:28)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "There's a question here that also implicates me. There's a bit of cheekiness."

(35:33)

Reshma Chhiba: "Maybe you can answer it."

(35:35)

Nontobeko Ntombela: (*laughing*) "There's a bit of cheekiness in the title *Come Inside*, which reflects also perhaps a relationship between you the artist, the curator as friends. Tell us a bit about this."

(35:49)

Reshma Chhiba: "Well I mean, you know, I think I like to use humour in the work as well and is particular in the titling of the work. Sometimes I don't even title in English, but I think it's always fun to play with the title a bit. And it was a bit cheeky. The point was to be a bit cheeky. As much as the work was serious and it was difficult to work in that space - it was physically and emotionally draining. I think humour in work adds something else to it."

(36:27)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "You didn't bring the clip."

(36:30)

Reshma Chhiba: "Of *Come Inside*? No."

(36:34)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "The president of South African Hindu Maha Sabha Ashwin Trikamjee said creativity in art is not license to use the Hindu religion to legitimise the artist's symbols no matter what they may be. Can you tell us more about this response to your work?"

(36:58)

Reshma Chhibba: "Well, I mean my thing has always been, did he engage the work and just read what he says again."

(37:06)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Creativity in art is not license to use the Hindu religion to legitimise the artist's symbols no matter what they may be."

(37:15)

Reshma Chhibba: "Ya, I mean I don't even know what that means in relation to the work because he clearly did not engage it. *(laughter)* So I just feel, my response then was also that unless he actually saw the work and sat down and had a conversation with me, I did not want to respond to this. And I refuse to. I refuse to entertain garbage."

(37:41)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "There were more writings about your work that circulated and many of them chose to sensationalise the work and made it more controversial than it was, with some articles going as far as interviewing Hindu groups, guards, gardeners and a random Fine Art student and feminist. In fact, in an eNCA article, they even issued an apology saying that, "the initial story we'd published suggested that feminists were outraged by this artist's work. This is in fact untrue. The artist made reference to feminists accusing her of objectification, however no mention was made in the article of who these feminists were. The initial headline 'Feminists see red over vagina' was therefore misleading. We regret this error." This framing is rather odd. How would you prefer your work to be discussed in the popular media or discourse?"

(38:48)

Reshma Chhibba: "I don't know this article. *(laughing)* Where did you guys find this?"

(38:54)

Sharlene Khan: "We do research."

(38:55)

Reshma Chhibba: (*laughing*) "Wow and there was an apology? So the only people I asked for an apology was *The Post*, which I never got. So okay, this is interesting, I don't know about this, but how would I like my work to be engaged? Well it should be engaged right? And I think that a lot of these articles were just copy-pastes and snippets of interviews that they've heard. So for me the main thing is to actually, firstly, visit the work, experience the work and have a conversation with me. What you take from it and how you read it is on you, as it should be with all art or all forms of creativity, like when you listen to a song, you take something different than I would, so how it is written about really doesn't bother me, but it does bother me that it is not engaged with or not seen."

(39:53)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What does it actually mean beyond metaphoric for the vagina to be viewed as a space of power?"

(40:00)

Reshma Chhibba: "Well I think in this particular case it was specific to the women's jail. So it was very much about claiming power back in that space. It was about a respect for the vagina especially in a place like Johannesburg, especially now, not that that hasn't been the case all the time but it's feeling harder and scarier to be a woman in Johannesburg at the moment. So it really is about claiming power, claiming safety, claiming security back. And in that case, giving voice to unheard voices, to imprisoned voices."

(40:46)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "You have made links between your work *Come Inside* and the need to talk about issues of sexuality, women's bodies and power in light of the staggering numbers of abuse against women and children. Yet given this novel idea of wanting to open up discussions

within, there's still negative reactions by media and some conservative groups. More and more we continue to hear about cases of killings of women and selling of their body parts, what do you think our role as women to be activists of gender issues and how do we tackle this within visual arts given the negative feedback that you have been exposed to?"

(41:27)

Reshma Chhibba: "Well I think we have to do the work anyway, even if there is negative feedback, even if there is always a push back, because there is always going to be a push back. That's why patriarchy still exists right because that's, it's always going to be a push back. But I think it's important that we do this work and we do it in various ways. I don't think that it's just visual art, I think we can use any medium: writing, dance, music, that we have to keep bringing these issues out. We have to force conversations and force discussions. We have to force people into rooms to watch and engage these things. And that's the only way."

(42:11)

Sharlene Khan: "Say a little bit about your recent dance performance."

(42:14)

Reshma Chhibba: "Yeah, I mean, so if you... sorry it was just the next slide, that image."²⁴

(42:22)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Is that that that dance? That specific project..."

(42:25)

Reshma Chhibba: "This one here, here... So this was the recent project that I did entitled *SHrEe: I am more than just my body*. This image is from a famous scene, 'The Disrobing of Draupadi' which comes from an epic called the *Mahabharata*, in which the female, the main female figure, Draupadi is married to five men, not by choice. And they are five brothers and she is then lost by one of her husbands in a game of dice to their cousins. And the cousins then drag her into the court where all the kings and friends and men basically are sitting and they begin to disrobe her

²⁴ Chhibba is referring here to her dance performance *SHrEe* (2017), performed in Lenasia (see Fig. 21)

but, of course, in the epic, she then prays and the god Krishna comes down and sends her endless reams of saree, so as he is unbinding and unraveling her, she never - he is exhausted and she never is naked, because supposedly Krishna gives her all this cloth. So in the piece, of course, I am disrobed on stage because if Krishna really did exist then he was able to give lots of reams of sarees, nobody would be raped right? So the reality of what is happening is what we explored in this concert 'I am more than just my body', and I think that is one way for us to deal with gender within spaces of, I mean, gender issues, gender violence within spaces of art. And what was interesting, someone made a comment and said no other, in no other space would you be able to get a whole bunch of Indian men from every generation to sit down and have to be forced to watch this, where you are talking about gender violence and you are talking about the kinds of abuse that happens in these communities, in these homes and it's not specific to Indian communities. But of course we were in a space that was filled with that community. So in a sense you have to force that, you have to force the engagement, and a lot of women left there feeling like they had a voice, they felt 'empowered', was the word they used. I don't want to use that word carelessly but a lot of women said that, that they felt as if their story was told. And it is about the telling of these stories that's important."

(45:05)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "You've said a few times in media that there is a difference between Tantric and Vedic notions of worship and sexuality, can you explain to us what the differences are."

(45:15)

Reshma Chhibba: "So for me, the way I understand it, I think it's quite complex, I do think that they overlap. I have said that in media quite specifically, in relation to Ashwin Trikamjee because he claims to be the bearer of knowledge of Hinduism in South Africa. And my idea is that one really has to engage the text²⁵ to fully understand where I am coming from and so my use of Kali is more from a tantric perspective in that within Tantra, it is from my understanding, and it's much more layered than how I am going to explain it, is that the goddess is more, is seen more in a position of power, whereas in Vedic Hinduism there is more of a focus on forces of

²⁵ Both Tantric and Vedic scriptures.

nature like sun, moon, fire, water. But there is an overlap, so both traditions would use Sanskrit mantra, and both would revere the goddess in some way, but within Tantric worship it's more about an outward engagement with the environment around you - Vedic is more internal. But in tantra as well, there is an internalised moment, but tantra would also have you go onto the cremation ground and sit in meditation on the cremation ground, which Vedic Hinduism wouldn't do. So there is, my use of it is more Tantric because it is more of something that's seen outside of what people are used to, which is why I like to emphasise it so people don't get upset about Hinduism."

(47:11)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I think we've sort of touched on this a little bit but maybe there's something that you want to expand on the exhibition titled *The Two Talking Yonis*?"

(47:23)

Reshma Chhibba: "Well I think it was something that we played around with a lot. I knew that I wanted to use the word 'yoni' as in 'vulva' and then we, you and I were having this conversation for a very long time and it just made sense that, I think initially you said "The Yonis Are Talking" (*laughing*), and we eventually decided on 'The Two Talking Yonis'. So it's a conversation, and it also, but for me it's that the conversation is always going to continue. It started in 2010 in the JAG boardroom and will end, I don't know, in a graveyard somewhere (*laughing*) - cremation ground."

(48:04)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Ja maybe this idea of yoni, maybe give some explanation of the terms that you use: yoni, vulvic, vulva, vagina, vaginal canal, phallus, lingam, linga, clit..." (*laughing*)

(48:21)

Reshma Chhibba: (*laughing*) "You've said it all, like what more do I need to say? (*laughter*) Well I mean I think, so some are terms I found through my research, but most of them we all know, we know 'vulva', we know 'vagina', we know 'vaginal cavity'. But then 'yoni' and 'linga' I bring in because they also start to relate very directly to Kali, to Shiva, to these

deities in Hinduism but without calling them those names. So they play between masculine and feminine. Linga is also something that, so for those who don't know what a linga is, it looks like a phallic stone, but the bottom of it is actually a cervix, so they both are intertwined constantly."

(49:16)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "And according to your perspective, what is feminine energy? And how can it be harnessed or invoked?"

(49:23)

Reshma Chhiba: "So when I say feminine energy, I think I am speaking specifically from a spiritual point of view and I think it's something that exists in all beings, not just women. So it's also in someone like Fouad (*laughing*), feminine energy (*laughing*). So feminine energy is Shakti and Shakti..."

(49:49)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "And our videographer here."

(49:51)

Reshma Chhiba: (*laughing*) "Yeah, our videographer. And Shakti translates as 'power' or 'energy'. It is the thing that allows us to move. Whereas the masculine is the thing that is stable. So together they create."

(50:09)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Interesting analogy, I've never heard this one before. (*laughter*) As a South African visual artist of Indian ancestry, what particular struggles does that bring, in this particular moment and perhaps be specific to the geo-specific context of being in South Africa."

(50:31)

Reshma Chhiba: "Well I think the one thing that I can say definitely is that if we look at the Indian woman in South African art, she is probably the most invisible, I think. Difficulties? You

are never selected for exhibitions even if you have, besides Nontobeko, Black female curators working, creating exhibitions around black feminism, around black feminisms, that you are never invited to exhibit on these things and that you always, or me, I'm always seen as making that Indian stuff, whatever that means. I don't know, what does Indian mean in this context. So it's always seen as something outside, and that for me is the difficulty because I have other artists of Indian ancestry saying that to me, "oh but you make that Indian stuff" and I kind of want to say "but how is a vagina Indian?" You know? How is it that we suddenly reading the vagina as Indian because it's made by an Indian woman who happens to be working with a Hindu perspective in mind. And that too, I'm just drawing on Kali and her mythology, it doesn't make it Indian. So I think for me the one difficulty is that, is the invisibility and the difficulty of finding space within black feminism, within blackness and in these conversations, and maintaining relevance."

(52:08)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "But maybe as you've touched on black feminism, what does it mean to you? And maybe generally feminisms at large."

(52:18)

Reshma Chhibba: "Well if I think about feminisms or if I think about feminism, I automatically go back to my grandmother, and I think about how she negotiated her space, how she had negotiated this land that she was in. And for me, feminism is not necessarily going out and charging like a bull, but its finding a way to accept and be yourself within something that is outside of you. And it's not just one conversation, you know its race, its class, its gender, it's all of these things."

(53:09)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Okay, I'm now moving on to the very awkward series of questions which are based on the Marcel Proust Bernard Brun and James Lipton questionnaire that has been adopted by the *Art on our Mind* group. To start off, why do you have two back-to-back H's on your surname?" (*laughter*)

(53:34)

Reshma Chhiba: "Well, because my grandfather was illiterate when he came to South Africa (*laughter*) and so he registered my dad and said 'Chiba' and the white guy behind the counter said "Chiba with a double H?" and so I have two H's but my cousins, my dad's brother's children have one 'H' because they were registered by my uncle who was not illiterate." (*laughing*)

(53:59)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Very poetic. *Times Live* article in 2013 noted that you are "physically refined" (*laughter*) and have "kiss curls". Would you describe your curls in such a manner? And what do you think these kinds of writings are responding to in stating such unrelated physical attributes to your work. The *Art on our Mind* research team was wondering if anyone mentions William Kendriges' physique when they write about his work?" (*laughter*)

(54:31)

Reshma Chhiba: "What is this, what 2008/2009?"

(54:40)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "13."

(54:41)

Reshma Chhiba: "2013! Wow! Okay, well I think when people do that. It's interesting, cause I've read a lot of articles of dancers, poets, artists, curators, female... of women who automatically when they introduce, they describe how the woman looks, which is weird. I don't know why it's necessary, like as if my creativity is not outside of how I look or how my hair falls. But I would think that that's probably done because they, the person who wrote it just has no access to what I'm doing and has no understanding, doesn't know how to engage it, so well let's describe how she looks."

(55:30)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I won't say anything."

(55:32)

Reshma Chhiba: "No, please do. *(laughing)* Kiss curls. You also have kissed curls going on." *(laughter)*

(55:42)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "How do you define art?"

(55:45)

Reshma Chhiba: "How do I define art? I think for me, art is something that should discomfort in some way, should move you in some way, should shift something." *(laughing)*

(56:04)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Alright. What delights you instantaneously?"

(56:08)

Reshma Chhiba: "Dance." *(laughing)*

(56:13)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Hmmm. And what is your pet peeve generally?"

(56:21)

Reshma Chhiba: "When people make irritating sounds when they eat." *(laughter)*

(56:27)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What's your least favourite colour?"

(56:31)

Reshma Chhiba: "Like that green on the wall, that green. *(laughter)* I don't know, I don't know." *(laughing)*

(56:37)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Isn't it always something in the room? *(laughter)* I said red."

(56:42)

Reshma Chhiba: "What!"

(56:43)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "It was in front of me. *(laughter)* Do you have a favourite book or writer? And if you were a literary character, who would you be?"

(56:56)

Reshma Chhiba: "I'd be Kali. *(laughing)* No, but *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy."

(57:05)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Who's your favourite artist?"

(56:07)

Reshma Chhiba: "Ooh, I don't know, I don't think I have a favourite artist. Sharlene Khan. I don't know. *(laughter)* Frida Kahlo. *(laughing)*

(57:16)

Sharlene Khan: "In that order?" *(laughter)*

(57:18)

Reshma Chhiba: "Yeah, yeah. *(laughter)*

(57:23)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Who is your heroine?"

(57:24)

Reshma Chhiba: "My grandmother. There is so many women around me but my grandmother. My maternal grandmother."

(57:34)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "If you could wish an artwork into life, which one would you want to have? "

(57:41)

Reshma Chhiba: "Into life? "

(57:42)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Into your life."

(57:44)

Reshma Chhiba: "Into my life? I don't know. Sharlene Khan." (*laughing*)

(57:48)

Sharlene Khan: "Do you want the other finger?" (*laughter*)

(57:51)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Oh, I'm not seeing these things. Which artist, artwork or movement do you despise? These questions are always unfair."

(58:02)

Reshma Chhiba: "This is a hard question. Despise a movement or artwork?"

(58:13)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I have a few."

(58:14)

Reshma Chhiba: "You answer the question then."

(58:16)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "No."

(58:19)

Reshma Chhiba: "I don't know, it's not something I think about. You know what I do despise? I do despise, I despise people who do Bharatanatyam badly and pass it off as 'Indian dance'. I despise people who pass off bad Bollywood as 'Indian dance'. I despise when people misinterpret and use classical Indian dance or mythology in ways that they assume are right and it's just a bad interpretation of it, and then it sets all Indians up because everyone reads Indians as this collective: we came as one, we exist as one, we eat one food. And we speak one language, which is called 'Indian'." *(laughter)*

(59:07)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Ask Zakhiti because she knows that language." *(laughter)*

(59:11)

Reshma Chhiba: "So yeah, I despise those things, I despise that aesthetic that people put around Indians. It's not a movement but it is very present."

(59:26)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What songs gets you going?"

(59:30)

Reshma Chhiba: "Joh. Patta Patta." *(laughing)*

(59:37)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I thought you were going to say Bharatanatyam." (*laughing*)

(59:40)

Reshma Chhiba: "No, that's the song I put on when I dress for dances, the first song I put on."

(59:46)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "*Patta Patta?*"

(59:47)

Reshma Chhiba: "Miriam Makeba *Patta Patta*."

(59:48)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Wow."

(59:50)

Reshma Chhiba: "It's my get into the zone song."

(59:52)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "We should have played the song before the start. What's your favourite word?"

(59:58)

Reshma Chhiba: "My favourite word? I don't know." (*laughing*)

(1:00:07)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Least favourite word. I don't know."

(1:00:11)

Reshma Chhiba: (*laughing*) "I don't know. Hey?"

(1:00:16)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What turns you on?"

(1:00:18)

Reshma Chhiba: "In what way?"

(1:00:19)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "It gets worse. It's downhill from here." (*laughter*)

(1:00:23)

Reshma Chhiba: "What turns me on? These are like..."

(1:00:30)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What turns you off?"

(1:00:33)

Reshma Chhiba: "Bad food." (*laughter*)

(1:00:39)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What makes you laugh?"

(1:00:42)

Reshma Chhiba: "These questions, I don't know." (*laughing*)

(1:00:51)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I can't even read these things. What is your best virtue?"

(1:00:54)

Reshma Chhiba: "My best virtue? I don't know. You know, Nonto, what is my best virtue? You know me."

(1:00:58)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I don't know. (*laughing*) These questions, mara. What is your idea of misery?"

(1:01:07)

Reshma Chhiba: "My idea of misery? Suicide."

(1:01:17)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What sound or noise do you love? There's an age restriction, right?" (*laughter*)

(1:01:26)

Reshma Chhiba: "The rain."

(1:01:31)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What is your favourite swearword?"

(1:01:34)

Reshma Chhiba: "Fuck, I don't know."

(1:01:41)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Is that all?" (*laughter*)

(1:01:47)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?"

(1:01:52)

Reshma Chhiba: "Nothing."

(1:01:55)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "They get difficult hey? Ja, these questions are hard to answer. I feel you, I feel you, it's even difficult to ask them. What profession would you not like to do?"

(1:02:05)

Reshma Chhiba: "Gynaecology." (*laughter*)

(1:02:13)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Okay, kinda messed up there. If your mood..."

(1:02:19)

Reshma Chhiba: "This better not be edited in a way that makes it seem like I wanted to do gynaecology." (*laughing*)

(1:02:25)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "If your mood was a weather forecast for the year, you'd be..."

(1:02:34)

Reshma Chhiba: "Sometimes autumn, sometimes summer."

(1:02:40)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "And how would you like to die."

(1:02:42)

Reshma Chhiba: "In my sleep. Just go to sleep and not wake up."

(1:02:48)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "This is going to be a strange question. It's the last one. If heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates? Hmm, I didn't know they were pearly."

(1:03:06)

Reshma Chhiba: "Aweh ma se kind!" *(laughing)*

(1:03:10)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Aweh. Okay we will end there and open it up to questions."

(1:03:20)

Reshma Chhiba: "Oh gosh, Sharlene, no."

(1:03:23)

Sharlene Khan: "I just wanted to hear a little bit more about your grandmother because, of course, I know the story about your grandmother but others won't necessarily because we both have very different histories of arrival."

(1:03:35)

Reshma Chhiba: "No, but we are all Indian, so..." *(laughing)*

(1:03:38)

Sharlene Khan: "If we weren't all Indian, what would be your story?"

(1:03:41)

Reshma Chhiba: "So my grandmother, unlike like your grandmother, my grandmother came here in the 1950s, but she was married at the age of three. She sat on her mother's lap. My grandfather was seven and, of course, before she was even born she was promised to my grandfather. So she sat on her mother's lap and got married at the age of three. When she started menstruating, so she was a woman, she then moved to live with her in-laws.²⁶ At that time they were still in India. And then my granddad came with his father to South Africa, and then I think he may have visited once. And she then stayed with their son. She had a child in India and then some time in the 50s, the date is not clear, she came. But of course she came with this child that my grandfather always questioned the paternity of, 'til the day he died. But it was interesting because she came and I think they ended up somewhere in Witbank, on this vast, expansive land,

²⁶ Exact age unknown.

running someone else's shop. So my grandfather was a trader and, of course, was, you know... was just this woman who had to do everything in the house, who these babies after babies after babies and had no help. And then learnt to speak Fanagalo because she couldn't speak English and had an Italian neighbour who also spoke Fanagalo and that is how they communicated and she helped her bring up the children and in other ways. So she was this woman who lived this life that so many women of her generation lived, with a, not to speak badly of my grandfather, but an alcoholic husband who, you know, sometimes went a bit too far; who lived in a land where language was foreign, the land was foreign, the people were foreign. But she always, and I think until the day she died, she did this, and I think she did it purposely, she always chose to never speak with the colonial tongue. So she never spoke English, but it was always a barrier because my Gujarati is terrible. I understood it and understand it perfectly but I speak it very badly. And I suppose that has to do a lot with the fact that my parents were first generation South African and were forced to have to learn English and so I grew up in a home where we spoke English. So for me, there's this connection that I feel to her, but there was always this distance because of language. And it's only after she died²⁷ that I really felt drawn to her and discovered the kind of power she was because to endure the things that these women endured, and it's not a unique story, but it's a story that should be told nonetheless. It takes a great amount of power. So for me, she really is, and I write about this, that I'm not quite sure who comes first into my space, in my mind, in my being, is it my grandmother or is it Kali? But at some point, they are synonymous and that power is her. So for me, even though Kali is defiance, I think my grandmother had defiance in so many ways, she chose not to speak the colonial tongue; that she abided by her duties, yet still maintained dignity; that she, even after she died, many years later people still talk about her as the mother of the community, as the knowledge of the community. She was the woman who people went to for advice, so ja, she's, for me she's that power, and that stock is hopefully inside me." *(laughing)*

(1:08:17)

Audience member: "What has been your favourite place to... What exhibition was your favourite place to have your stuff displayed?"

²⁷ In 1998.

(1:08:28)

Reshma Chhibba: "So I think I quite enjoyed Constitution Hill because I like showing in spaces that aren't necessarily museums or gallery where work really does shift beyond just being art on the wall that one collects. So I often think about spaces like that, think about using spaces like that, ja. So I would say, for now its Constitutional Hill, but I would never work there again out of principle. *(laughing)* I won't get into that. This is going on record."

(1:09:11)

Audience member: "So your work is not easy, so you don't make it 'easy' for your visitors. Let's say, especially as male visitor, how do you deal with that kind of confrontation when you actually know you're putting them like in the, you have that audience of men, of all generations like you said, or in the Con Hill when you have reactions of the audience. Because in a way it's also very performative even if that's an installation. How do you deal with that kind of feeling, what you get from that audience?"

(1:09:46)

Reshma Chhibba: "I mean it's interesting you ask that because for me it's never that people were forced to do this, were forced to come to the space and watch this. It was not something that I thought. It was something that an audience member said to me, so for me, people who came there were coming because they wanted to or because they were supporting their little girl right. And for me, even the *Come Inside* work, for example, was never intended to isolate men or make them feel outside of that space. Because even when I talk about that work, I talk about it as a space of balance, a space of both feminine and masculine. Even the portrait of, the self-portrait as Kali, is both feminine and masculine, that it is not, you know its non-binary and that's the intention. So for me, the intention is never to isolate, that that happens is outside of my control. But I do find that sometimes men assume the wrong thing about it, so even if the work is about challenging gender violence or bringing light to gender violence, suddenly I'm described as someone with a "refined physique" or whatever that was, or sexual advances made towards me because I'm making a vagina. And that happened quite a bit at that time, especially with male reviewers or writers. So, I actually, and maybe it's embedded in me as a woman, sometimes I

feel apologetic when I shouldn't, sometimes I feel a bit of fear. It's never that I intend to isolate, actually. I never feel as if I'm the one in power, even though the work is about that."

(1:11:42)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Do you mind showing..."

(1:11:45)

Reshma Chhibha: "Are we ending off with the Indianness?" (*laughing*)

(1:11:51)

Sharlene Khan: "Also, just for me - what's next?"

(1:11:53)

Reshma Chhibha: "What's next? So this last project that we did, *SHrEe*, for me I think the one problem that has always been there and it's how we started this conversation, is these masks, these two masks that Nonto says I wear, and always wants to know which one is the 'real Reshma'. Where the dance exists is something, and the visual arts exists is something. But this project, this *SHrEe* project for me was really a coming together of the two because it used contemporary movement, it used English as a language, it used poetry. It shifted from Sanskrit to English, it shifted from Bharatanatyam to contemporary, well contemporary as we deconstruct it from Bharatanatyam. It shifted from all the finery of Bharatanatyam to the leotard so... and conceptually it was very much in line with what I do in my visual art practice anyway, it was specific to gender-based violence. So, it's for me a merging of the two practices and we will see where that goes, but I do know that it's probably going to have some sort of impact on my visual art practice which might start becoming more performative, even if it's still for the camera. It will." (*laughing*)

(1:13:18)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I think people would like to see the dance, no?"

(1:13:23)

Reshma Chhiba: "Okay, so this is just a... it's..."

(1:13:36)

Fouad Asfour: "But Nonto also had questions."

(1:13:37)

Sharlene Khan: "... the fights that she wanted to have."

(1:13:37)

Fouad Asfour: "Separate questions."

(1:13:42)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "These questions, they're long and they come out in various ways. Well I mean, I suppose it's not really a..."

(1:13:45)

Fouad Asfour: "But we are curious too." (*laughter*)

(1:13:52)

Reshma Chhiba: "They need to get a fight publicly now."

(1:13:55)

Nontobeko Ntombela: (*laughing*) "Well let's watch the dance first."

(1:13:58)

Reshma Chhiba: "Okay so this is just an edit of a production we did last year and the reason I am showing this one is because specifically I enact the role of Kali.²⁸ But it's a group piece, I'm not going to tell you which one I am and it's more traditional so the dress, the music, the movement."

²⁸ Chhiba is referring to her performance *Samyoga* (2016), which was held at The Fringe at Joburg Theatre.

(1:14:23)

****Music starts playing****

(1:14:40)

Reshma Chhiba: "The music and the movement are not synced."

(1:15:41)

****Music ends****

(1:15:46)

Sharlene Khan: "So why does it take, what I know is that it takes about 12 years for Bharatanatyam learning. Why so long?"

(1:15:54)

Reshma Chhiba: "So a lot of what you are learning is from a book called the Natya Shastra, which is described as a treatise on dramaturgy. So it takes you, you learn about twenty-four single handed gestures, twenty-four double handed gestures, you learn a range of eye, head, neck movements. Some schools teach shoulder, eyebrow, all of these different kinds of movements. You learn a range of maybe about seventy-five basic steps and then you learn about storytelling, the art of mime. And so every hastha, every mudra has meaning. And to perfect just the basic stance, also it's like a ballet plie and it's a lot of pressure on the body. But to dance in that formation continuously, also takes time to learn, it takes time to perfect the every step. It takes time to learn music and musicology and timing and rhythm and all of those things. So in all it takes about twelve years – it really depends on the dancer, it depends on the teacher, it depends on the time. Why it takes twelve years in this country is because you see your dance student once a week. If you were in India, you would dance every day. So ja, it's really that."

(1:17:31)

Sharlene Khan: "Nonto."

(1:17:33)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Ja, I mean there are many questions as you know. But I mean, I guess maybe you could expand on how you see this cross-over becoming... Because I mean we've had conversations about this and how, on the one hand I see the influences and the conversations that are happening between your visual artwork and your dance, and somehow in my head I've often kind of wondered or have this imagination of it coming at once and the language that you use, somehow kind of mixing these things. And having that sense. And I know the navigation that you are processing of as you produce your work. So I often also think that my questions are unfair because it's a process that your work is taking. But ja, I mean if you had to kind of speak about an imagination of its culmination together, what would that be?"

(1:18:55)

Reshma Chhibba: "Well I think it's this last project that we did but it would possibly start shifting from the theatre space to a different kind of space. And not that that has to be a gallery or museum. But that also, the coding that I use in both the dance and the photographic work, start to become understood. I think at the moment everything seems too inaccessible to people. Part of the work is that it is inaccessible and that's the point. And like Fouad was pointing to, is that you have to do the work sometimes. You have to go and Google that Sanskrit word to understand what the meaning of the painting is. But for me, it is about getting to a space where it stops being seen as something outside of a South African context, because it is very much a part of the fabric of this place. It's over hundred and fifty three years old, or whatever, in this place. So it shouldn't be... for me it's about getting to a point where the dance is not suddenly seen as this medium that I'm introducing into my visual art practice because it's something I like to do, it's something that I grew up doing. It's part of who I am. So I don't know, I suppose I'm..., I don't know if I'll ever get it right, but I feel like it's something that I have to keep trying."

(1:20:26)

Sharlene Khan: "Aren't there larger disciplinary issues here because we talking about decolonisation and all these issues around these kinds of arbitrary distinctions and there's been such a long push for... And visual arts is very cannibalistic by nature, why are we so reticent to bringing certain dance forms and dance styles into the gallery space, into visual arts space, in using the codings of those. I mean certain Western artists have done it, but the moment you try to

bring that as another artist, I mean I'm trying to bring Michael Jackson into this place right. Don't worry I'm not going to try to moonwalk. *(laughter)* But the point is..."

(1:21:16)

Reshma Chhibba: "Have your socks back if you need to." *(laughter)*

(1:21:18)

Sharlene Khan: "It's not white enough. But the point is, if you kind of read the things that Jackson says about his working methodologies, for me as an artist, there's probably more I identify in his working methodologies than perhaps another visual artist. But the visual arts only accepts certain forms as legitimate in terms of dance. And we know what those forms are. So for me, I find it excruciating to sit through a lot of dance, contemporary dance, you know when they do that kind of gesture I just want to stab somebody really, you know. I don't find anything revolutionary in it, I find it quite staid. And I'm thinking about what so many different cultures and different dance forms to offer these kinds of spaces, but we are still stuck with the canonisation of those and that actually our field tends to suffer from those kinds of very rigid distinctions. So if we want to see a fusion of dance and art then we have to go and see you know Jay Pather's performance, or somebody else's performance in that way and then its 'theatre' and its 'contemporary dance'. Why's it not visual arts, how is that not visual arts?"

(1:22:38)

Reshma Chhibba: "No, you are right."

(1:22:40)

Sharlene Khan: "So I think there's also a larger disciplinary issues about the kind of ideas we have about what is visual arts that really need to be broken in this country, certainly not just limited to this country."

(1:22:54)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "But I mean I suppose it touches on what I often feel is Reshma's resistance of the stage being that space of the culmination of that work existing in the dance and not necessarily having to be in the gallery space. We've toyed around these ideas and often it's been like but that becomes too trite, and there's this tension of sort of stopping of yourself and saying that why not claim the performance as an exhibition. And why not extend that and start bringing or using the visual language that you're already using in your art in that space. And be more assertive about it being present and unapologetic about it starting to disrupt the disciplines - that this is now a performance of dance, this is now an exhibition."

(1:23:58)

Sharlene Khan: "You've also spoken about this. That you need to be less apologetic about this because we're always stuck with we have our own cultures and own long histories of knowledges and creativities and then we are always stuck under the colonial gaze of these, and so we don't want to replicate the kinds of exoticness that the colonial trope has put laid on us, you know like the last 400 years or whatever. And so we are so careful of not replicating these colonial gazes and colonial understandings of our culture, but at the same time we end up giving our power over the kinds of deeper explorations that we want to make. At a certain time I think you just have to say well you know, fuck it, you just do it and if they are going to continue to read it like that, then that is their thing. We never going to get deeper into our communities, bodies of knowledge, if we are only ever worried about how they are going to read us."

(1:25:01)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "One last question. Maybe, is there anyone else with a question?"

(1:25:10)

Audience member: "For your dance, for your performance, do you sort of, is your dance shown in a gallery space as images as well?"

(1:25:26)

Reshma Chhiba: "No, so it's separate projects. The works that are shown in gallery spaces with a dancer, are works that are specifically made as visual artworks that would exist. So these -

Nonto, you've flipped over it, go back.²⁹ Ja, so these with the dancer are made specifically in a studio with a concept in mind, with an outcome in mind that will be shown as a photographic image or a video, so it's not necessarily something that is performed and then suddenly shown. So it's quite thought through."

(1:26:03)

Audience member: "Thanks for that. Why I asked this is because I was thinking, if she is there doing a dance, then how does she then know which specific moment she wants to capture, and you know, shown like that...?"

(1:26:26)

Reshma Chhibba: "So in this case she is directed by me. So in the visual art studio, I am directing whereas on stage or in the choreography studio it's often her taking the... It's the same person, so she would often take the lead. So that collaboration is also interesting for me, where the power dynamic changes."

(1:26:52)

Audience member: "Just a follow up. Maybe I should have asked the other way round. Were there any responses from the audience if it's in the gallery space or in the other performative context where you work, which actually surprised you in a way from audience members or like conference, where there any voices from visitors which were actually where you were surprised by what people were saying?"

(1:27:16)

Reshma Chhibba: "Well I was surprised by a lot of women feeling shame about the work at Con Hill. And a lot of women being upset by this. And I think if you YouTube it, there's conversations of women from other parts of the continent talking about this big vagina thing."

²⁹ Chhibba is referring to her images *Kalika* (Fig.7); *Kali Tandava* (Fig.8); *The Power of Time* (Fig.16); *The Unsatisfied Desire* (Fig.17).

And I mean I haven't watched them fully, but they sit on opposing sides of it, so it's interesting that it creates that dialogue but I was surprised. A part of me was surprised that women felt shame and a part of me wasn't, because women are brought up to feel shame about their bodies. Men are not. Men are taught to show it all and let it all hang out and be proud, and it's your masculinity and all of these things and you know women are taught to close your legs."

(1:28:09)

Sharlene Khan: "What? We are not allowed to grab and scratch and whatever."

(1:28:13)

Reshma Chhibba: "Yes, scratch and shift and do all of those things publically. (*laughing*) But what I was surprised by was the amount of support that we got from men at the last performance. I really thought a lot of Indian men would be more conservative and would be offended but we got a very good response."

(1:28:35)

Sharlene Khan: "I think what is also very surprising about the *Come Inside* work is that it actually was not a walk-in vagina. It was material and wood and plastic, and a funky-ass representation of what notions of vaginas are. So the fact the people were like she made a walk-in...I don't think that they have even experienced a vagina, if that was their thing, but the fact that they couldn't see the distinction between what was a playful kind of, a little bit crude representation of a vagina, versus an actual vagina. And I know I'm flattening it out but that flattening out is quite important because it shows how short that distance is between what is a physical object and the kinds of mythologies and governances around it."

(1:29:36)

Reshma Chhibba: "But what was also interesting about it was that it was the press that called it the massive walk-in vagina. I always described it as a vaginal cavity of some sort, of a shaft, a tunnel, a passageway. It was never... of course, yoni was there, meaning vulva, it was an entrance way. Sometimes it looked like a mouth, it had a tongue on the floor. You know you

walked onto a tongue. So it acted as many things and it wasn't necessarily that, but the thing that got, exploded was "massive artist makes massive walk in vagina".

(1:30:17)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "I mean, yeah, and being in the space, the one part I think that you haven't really talked about is the aspects of voice and the scream that becomes part of the encapsulating experience."

(1:30:30)

Reshma Chhibba: "And I think that was the one thing that really made it activate the space it was in, so as you walked in, you were confronted by the self-portrait and then every few minutes or so would be a shrill scream, which it was me screaming, so in a sense another kind of portrait as Kali. And then followed a few seconds after that, followed by a mocking laugh. So in a sense it screamed at you, but it screamed at the space, it revolted literally against the space through a different kind of push which is sound. And then it laughed at the space as well, it mocked it. It mocked the audience, it mocked you for getting scared at the laugh, so it activated on many levels. It also was warm inside, the sound was more muffled inside. It didn't really have air flow so there were interesting smells because you had to take your shoes when you entered. An automatically when you take your shoes off, people suddenly become more self-conscious, so it made people a bit uncertain about themselves as well, entering this thing, that's supposed to represent a vagina and then they had to exit almost this sort of rebirthing and coming into the light and then you entered this cold prison again, so ja, I think it did many things."

(1:31:50)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "The one thing, I mean from a recent presentation I did when I was in Accra and I was speaking about our projects, and I often feel the hint, and I'm sure you do it too, is it so why are you guys working together? What are the politics of your relationship and your race bring and maybe, ja, let's turn that to the audience and what you..?"

(1:32:30)

Reshma Chhiba: "I don't know, I mean I've, I think how we started is that we argued and that you always called me out on a range of things that I felt very uncomfortable about, which was politics and feminism and race and all of those things that you forced me to deal with and it was through the arguing that we really connected. And for me, I think that connection is about a lifelong conversation that possibly comes from somewhere else, but I don't want to get into that. So ya, that's what it is for me but I throw the same question back at you."

(1:32:59)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Any other questions? *(laughter)* There's a question there. Skhu."

(1:33:06)

Audience member: "No, I wanted to ask with a recent..."

(1:33:11)

Reshma Chhiba: "This is one of my other favourite artists, whose name I forgot to mention."
(laughing)

(1:33:15)

Audience member: "At least I am one of your favourite artists. Sorry I'm a bit late, but I wanted to ask with the recent project in Durban, the one that you were showing with Sharlene and other artist, conceptually because for me it was interesting to have this particular conversation, especially in Durban, but also around this notion of race. But also the work was, I was much more interested in what was the conversation prior to have three artists basically, but also the relationship between the works, what the works started to do in that space, amongst yourselves."

(1:33:57)

Reshma Chhiba: "So I mean, it was interesting because I, initially I kind of felt I came late to the conversation around..."

(1:34:06)

Sharlene Khan: "You did, because you weren't answering our emails." (*laughter*)

(1:34:10)

Reshma Chhibba: "So, I think in terms of race, I don't ever think it was about us working together as Indian artists, that happened to be a coincidence, but I think that we were all interested in some form of ancestry or how we exist in this space, in this country, how we came to be here, and that we were all tackling sexuality, violence and gender in some way, was the linking point for me in this conversation. But also the way that we treated the show was not that it necessarily became a curatorial engagement where everything was sort of one. We still had our separate spaces and then had moments of conversation in the actual exhibition. But I think Sharlene articulates a lot better around this than I do." (*laughing*)

(1:35:07)

Sharlene Khan: "So I think all of us were not, have not particularly been interested in Indian kind of shows, but when you find artists of the same ancestry that are doing interesting critical work that was the point of fusion. And so Jordache [Ellapen] was writing about my work and he was interested for his PhD and then he's writing for his book, and then he gets invited to a conference in Canada and then they see my work and then I get invited. And then he shows me some of his work and I'm like "oh my god, he hasn't shown any of these works and I'm like during my presentation, you can take some time and show your work as well", because I think that the space would appreciate it and so it became really just very mutually respectful of what someone else was doing and the kinds of dimensions that they were bringing about a community whose stories are very invisibilised, you know, we probably know more about the Guptas than we know about the Indian Indentured labourers and that kind of economic system and the demise of slavery as an economic model that, you know, the [British] empire uses. And so it became about how do we want to talk about these communities and these invisible stories and so I have this. Our story was about, or my story was about violence in our family and how to speak about these intersections of Indenture and colonialism and apartheid and then post-apartheid, and how

it is for economic migration - the kind of impact it has on women in particular in families where they travel across oceans and into different spaces and what it means to not have an extended family as a support system, and the kind of violence that was brought into my own family, which we still suffer with generations down the line. And then Jordache she's dealing with violences around being a gay man and what he does very brilliantly is, on one hand, where I have no photographs of my great grandparents or grandparents - I may have one of my granny I think - he has a whole archive of images that are really, really amazing, and so he superimposes, he draws out of that archives, moments of what I think is bio-mythographical telling where there is two male bodies that are maybe standing close to each other and he chooses to read a kind of eroticism between them. And we don't know whether this is real or not, but we've all had these uncles or aunts in the family who live with a friend and so he kinds of stages this and he stages his own bodies in moments of eroticism onto these, but he sort of also implicates motifs of sugarcane and the sea and African masks and it's really very beautiful work, but he is kind of showing this violence of the erasure of gayness and homosexuality within our community. And then when we started having this conversation about exhibiting together, Reshma was kind of an obvious choice because there's also the violence in her [work], and she had invited me to write on her work so I kind of got a little bit intimate on her work, and I think Jordache has written a new... So it really, I think it's a wonderful kind of dialogue that comes out of respectfulness and kinds of understanding of each other's works and what it offers, the kind of similarity but also the points of departure from them. So for me it's not really the Indian experience that foregrounds it, but it's rather the kinds of invisibilised histories that we're dealing with and the violences within our communities that are very gender-based and stem from patriarchy, and this kind of control and surveillance over women bodies, gay bodies, a whole host of bodies in our communities. And I don't think that it's something that only Indians can relate to. I think for us the disappointment in showing in Durban was... So KZNSA [KwaZulu-Natal Society of the Arts] is predominately a White space. You know, when people come out, it's mainly White patrons that come out. But for our show, there was less than a handful of White people, it was mainly just Indians that came out, which was the complete opposite you know. So on one hand it was very pleasing that so many Indian sort of middle class people came out to see the show and support the show, but on the other hand it was a real disappointment that there weren't any Black South Africans or Coloured South Africans or White South Africans to engage in it as if the fact that

we are Indian meant that the issues were not relevant or not of interest. But subsequent to that we have had lots of positive feedback from people that have come to see the show though, like "wow, this is like..." People have said it's the best show that KZNSA has had in the last couple of years. So there is a lot of power in that and think we want to take it..."

(1:40:11)

Reshma Chhibba: "Well, so it's coming to the point, a version of it is coming to the Point of Order next year. Well I'm not showing, I might want to show one work at least, but one, its size, but also it feels weird for me to show my work in a space that I manage so... And the proposal was accepted initially just on Jordache and Sharlene's work, so we are still going ahead with that exhibition and then hopefully we can take the full exhibition elsewhere."

(1:40:43)

Sharlene Khan: "Well the National Arts Festival rejected it, so."

(1:40:47)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Well they don't know what they are losing."

(1:40:49)

Sharlene Khan: "But yeah, these are the kinds of things, you know, the show that I put forward to the National Arts Festival to have it in our own department was rejected and then it gets accepted for the Greece Biennale out of 1300 applications. So you see, it's indicative of the kinds of struggles that you're saying, the invisibility of artists of Indian ancestry and how that is not on the scale of relevance, what we want to show right now in South Africa and it hasn't been for the last twenty years. It's still very much a schism between black, white and that middle ground is the Coloured artists, so there's no space for anybody else outside of that terrain basically."

(1:41:26)

Reshma Chhibba: "Let's not talk about things that people don't understand so, even..."

(1:41:30)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Well I mean I think it's interesting that that's the parody of our conversation and the extension of the other yonis that you are having, is that often people have this question that they want to ask, of why you are working with an Indian artist and how dare you want to engage with this foreign language to you. And so I think that there is, there is certainly so much work in terms of creating that visibility and extending the conversation with many, many other yonis. And to respond to the question that you threw back at me - again I think for me is that thing of having connections. When we started having conversations, it was not a conversation of whether your work was speaking to Indianess, I got drawn into the black paintings that for me are really powerful in the way that you are exploring material. And then the conversation about black feminisms came in and in all of those arguments that came out, what do we mean by black feminisms, cause for me it wasn't 'black' as in, 'blackness' as we purify it. It was the idea that blackness was speaking to an invisibility of women in a broad sense. And so I think that it's really interesting that these conversations, I think they need to be taken up, around these racialisations and these categories that tend to force back and limit the way that work can be engaged. And it's in such paradoxical conversations that suddenly I think we bring ideas that there's a shift beyond engaging, there are other ways of engaging with the work that move away from it always being read from an ethnic perspective, from a racial perspective. That there's opportunities to have that conversation about archives, about histories - a denialism that I've always kind of, of my own histories that my grandfathers go as far, come from Mozambique. So the sting of are you Zulu or are you Xhosa? Yes I grew up in Zululand but my ancestry goes as far as that. So the journey of our ancestors coming to South Africa, again, this is where we've had conversations that speak about these kinds of journeys, that are outside of it being Black or White, you know. Or Indian, or Coloured, so there's certainly, I suppose more conversations that have to happen around these ideas. And curatorial work, for me its expanding this idea of what curatorial work can be. So I mean, I think everyone is exhausted now."

(1:44:26)

Sharlene Khan: "Yes, so can we say thank you."

(1:44:27)

Nontobeko Ntombela: "Thank you very much to Reshma." (*applause*)

(1:44:33)

Sharlene Khan: "Thank you two very much for coming here on short notice, for giving up your time. I know this was very difficult time because it is exam time as well at Wits. So thank you very much for that. Of course it's been a pleasure having you and to just listening in on the two talking yonis."

****Dialogue ends****

Illustrations



Fig.1: © Reshma Chhibha, *Untitled* (2003)



Fig.2: Reshma Chhibha, *Revolt* (2004)

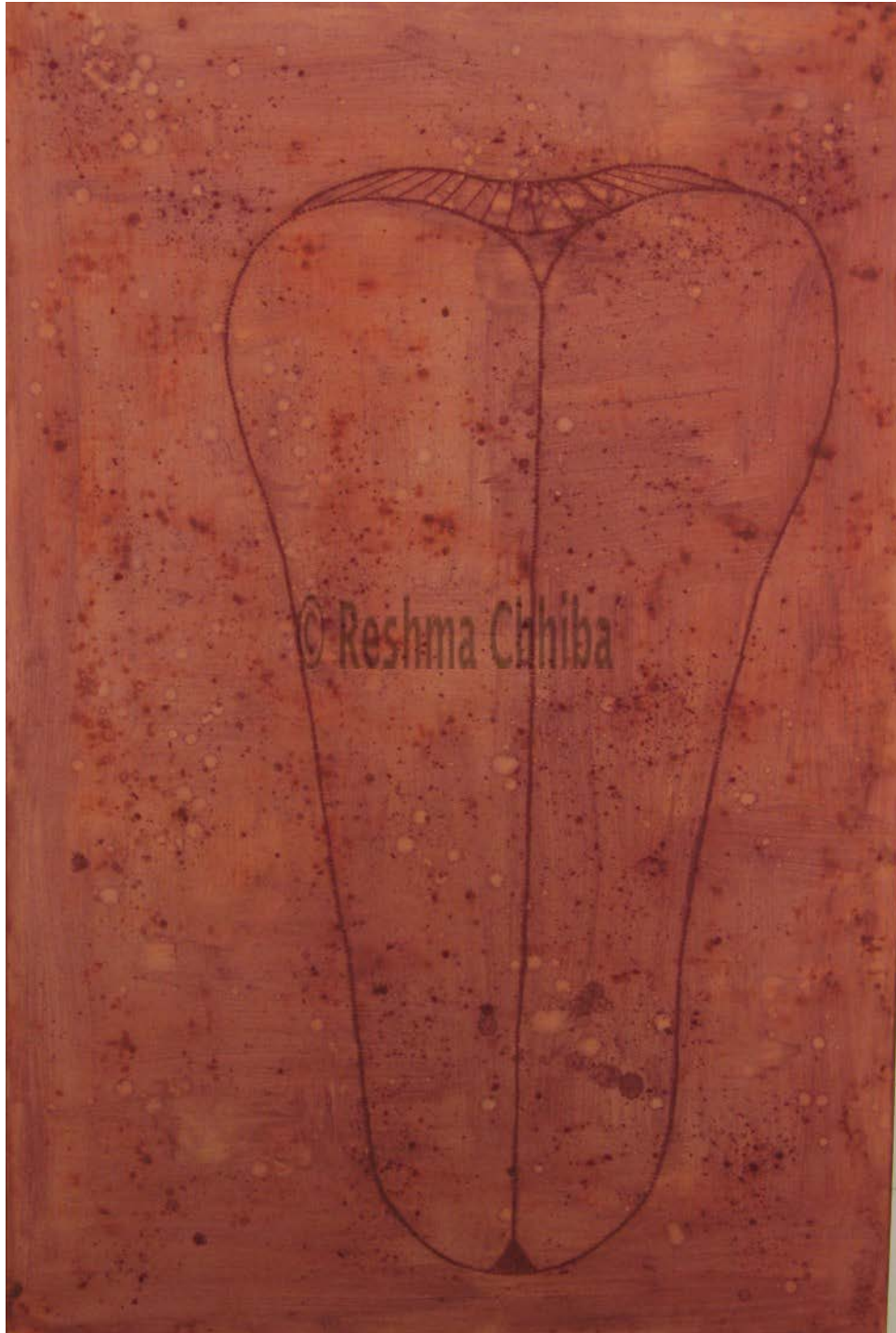


Fig.3: Reshma Chhibha, *Rubella* (2004)



Fig.4: Reshma Chhibba, *Portrait of Kālī* (2008)



Fig.5: Reshma Chhibha, *Wrathful Saviouress* (2007)

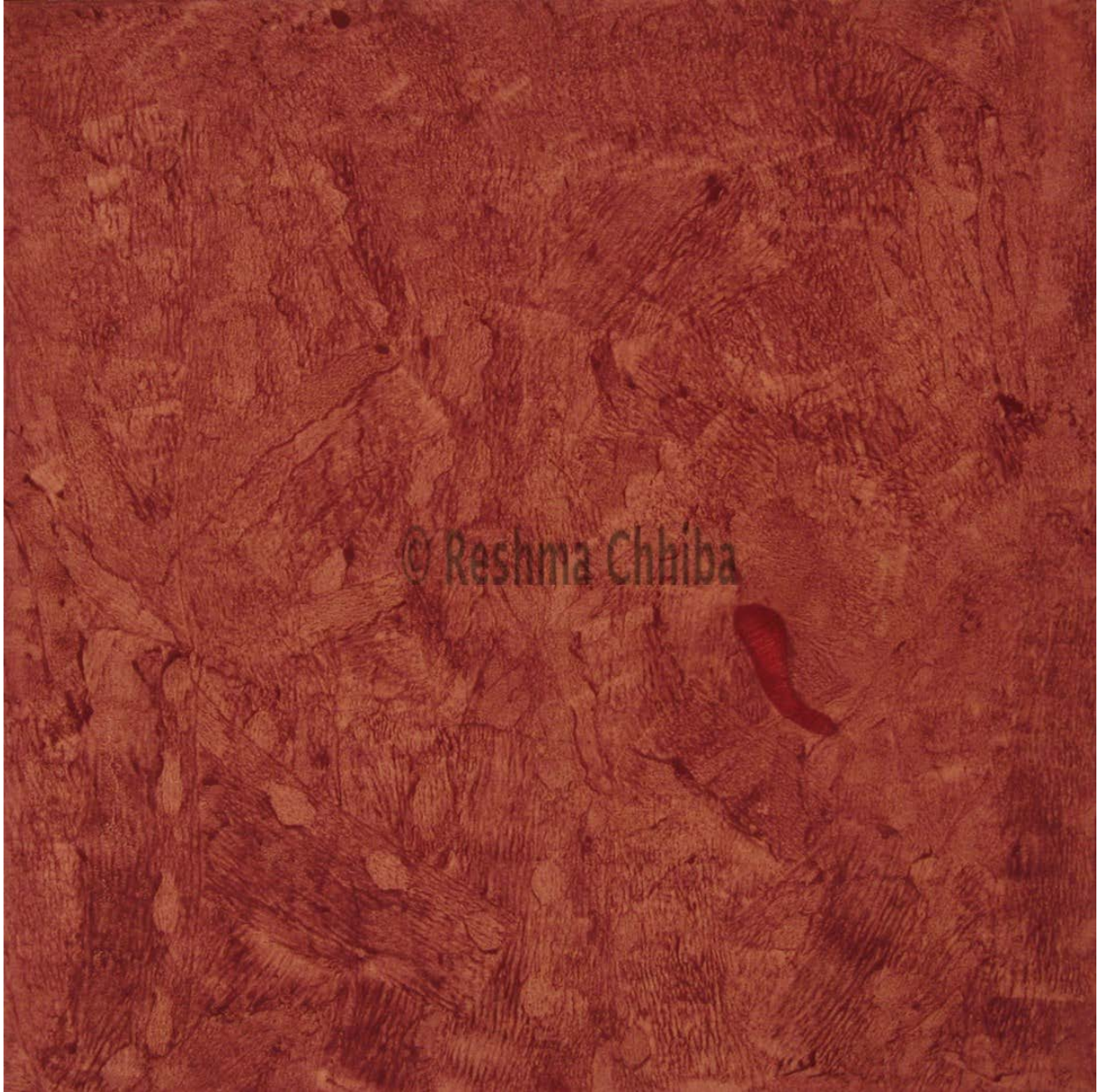


Fig.6: Reshma Chhibba, *It is 'kala' that devours all, but it is Kālī* (2007)



Fig.7: Reshma Chhibba, *Kalika* (2008)



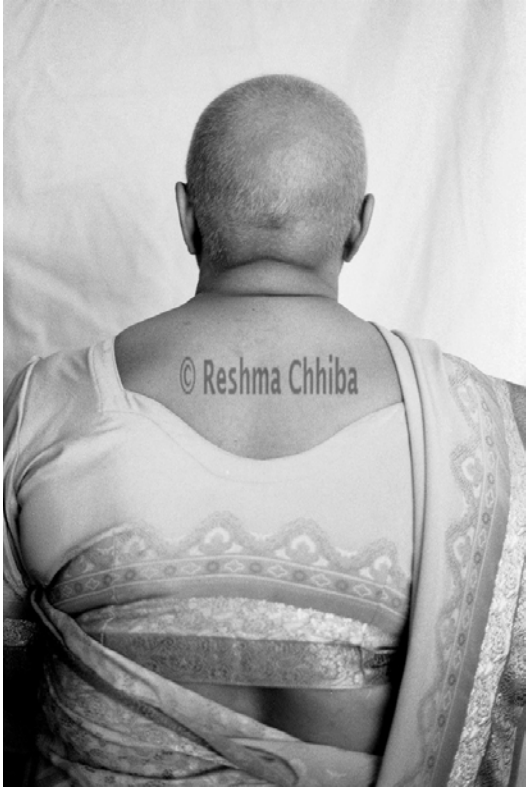
Fig.8: © Reshma Chhiba, *Kali Tandava* (2008)



[Left] Fig.9: © Reshma Chhibha, *Unawakened* (2008)



[Right] Fig.10: © Reshma Chhibha, *Restrained* (2008)



[Left] Fig.11: © Reshma Chhibba, *Stripped* (2008)



[Right] Fig.12: © Reshma Chhibba, *Unbridled* (2008)



Fig.13: © Reshma Chhibba, *Child Kali 1* (2009)



Fig.14: © Reshma Chhibba, *Linga-yoni* (2009)

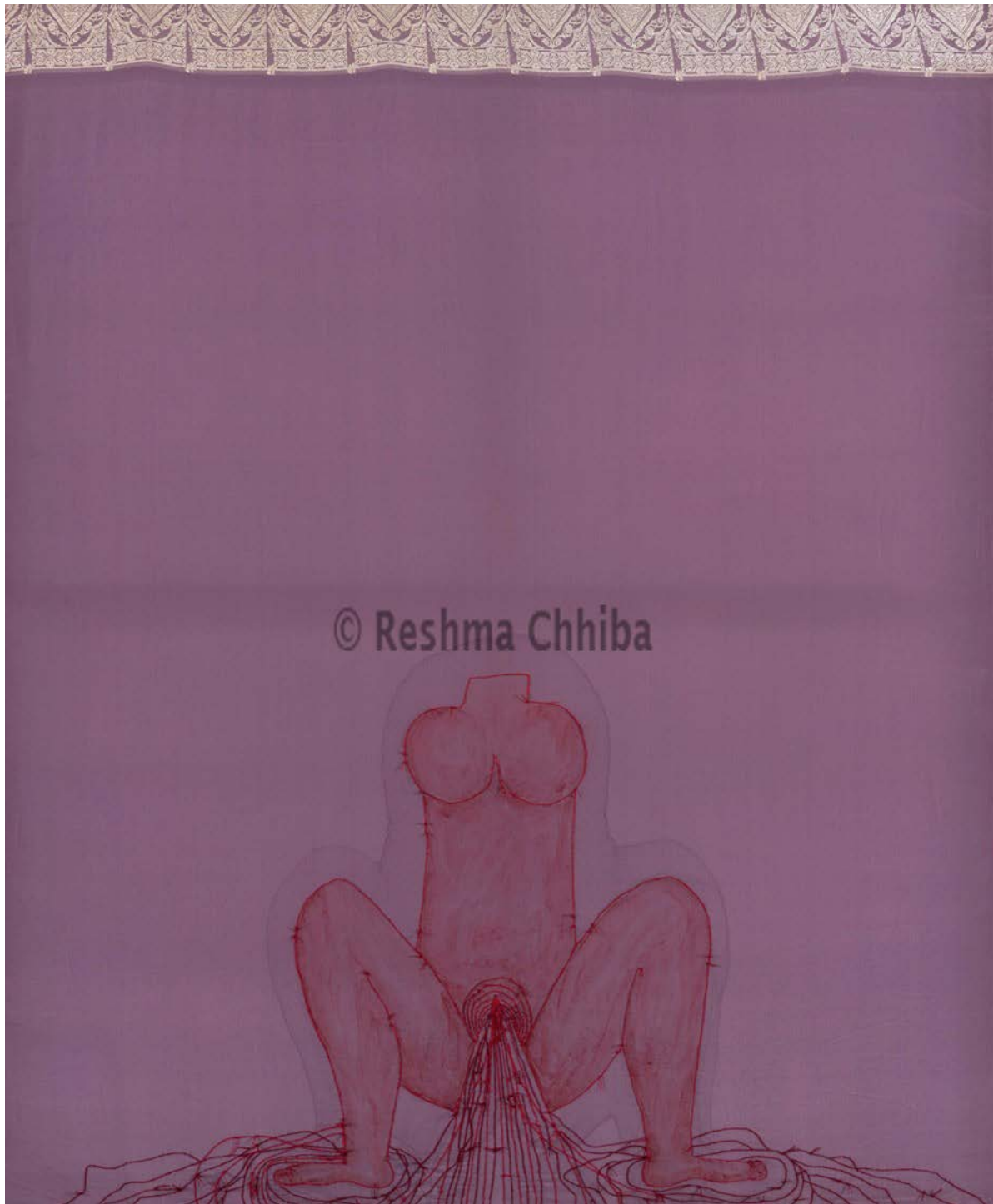


Fig.15: © Reshma Chhibba, *Sublime Essence* (2013)



Fig.16: © Reshma Chhibba, *The Power of Time* (2013)



Fig.17: © Reshma Chhibba, *The Unsatisfied Desire* (2013)



Fig.18: © Reshma Chhibha, *Come Inside* (2013)



Fig.19: © Reshma Chhibha, *Come Inside* (2013), detail (inner installation room)

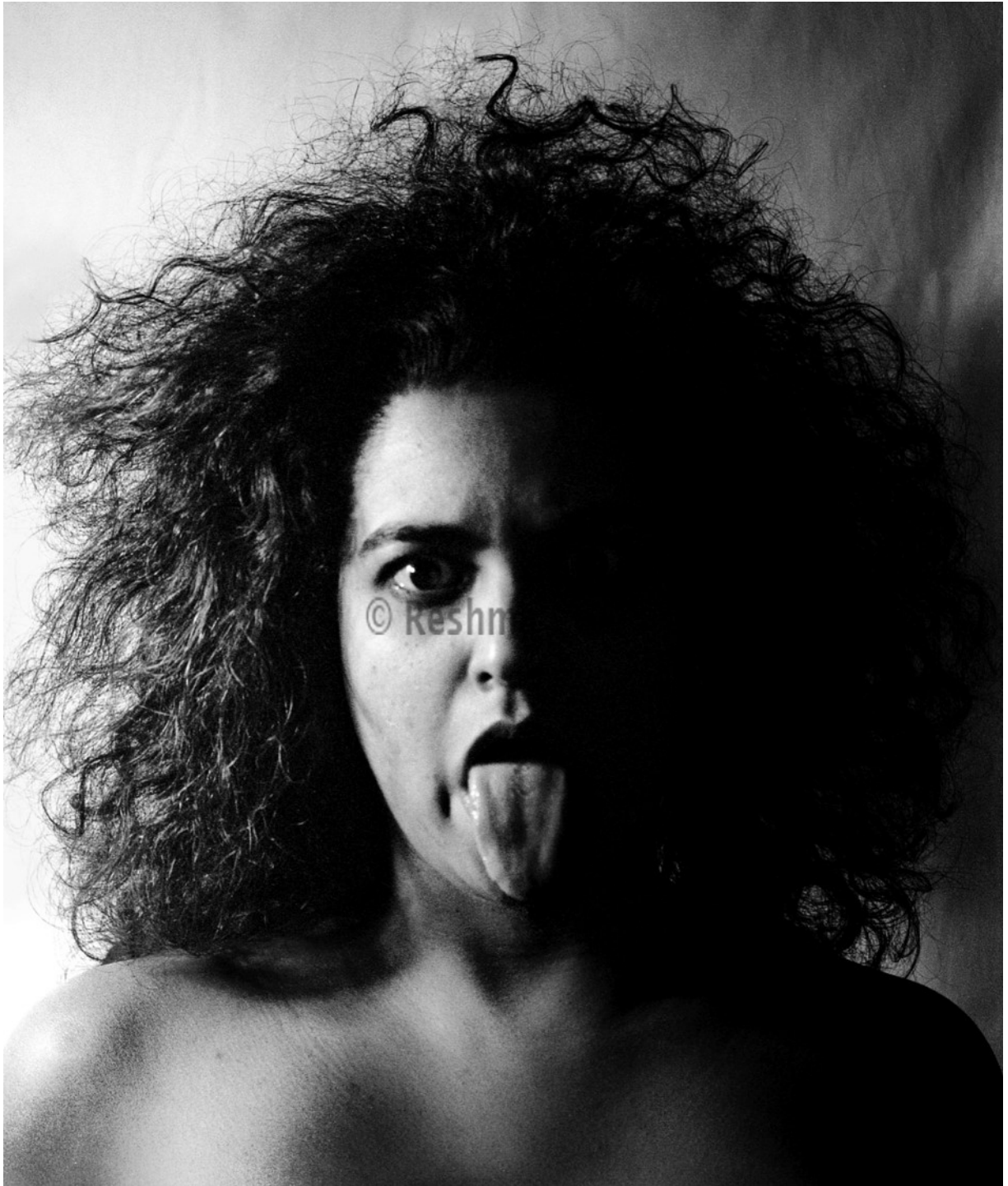


Fig.20: © Reshma Chhiba, *I am Kali, I am Black* (2013)



Fig.21: Reshma Chhiba and Anusha Pillay, *SHrEe* (2017)

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Fig.1: Reshma Chhibha, *Untitled* (2003), ed2/3, Colour video with no sound; Running time: 2 mins 13 secs, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.2: Reshma Chhibha, *Revolt* (2004), Sarees, thread, photographic images and beads on stretcher, 1.2m x 0.8m (each x 5/6), Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.3: Reshma Chhibha, *Rubella* (2004), Kum kum powder, turmeric and thread on canvas, 1.5m x 1m, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.4: Reshma Chhibha, *Portrait of Kālī* (2008), Cushioning, thread, wool, powdered coal, ash and kum kum powder on canvas, 50cm x 40cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.5: Reshma Chhibha, *Wrathful Saviouress* (2007), Kum kum powder, turmeric and thread on canvas, 1m x 1m, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.6: Reshma Chhibha, *It is 'kala' that devours all, but it is Kālī* (2007), Kum kum powder, turmeric and thread on canvas, 1m x 1m, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.7: Reshma Chhibha, *Kalika* (2008), ed. of 5, Pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 95cm x 112cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.8: Reshma Chhibha, *Kali Tandava* (2008), ed. of 5, Pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 90cm x 75cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.9: Reshma Chhibha, *Unawakened* (2008), ed. of 5, 2008, Pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 60cm x 40cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.10: Reshma Chhibha, *Restrained* (2008), ed. of 5, Pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 60cm x 40cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.11: Reshma Chhibha, *Stripped* (2008), ed. of 5, Pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 60cm x 40cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.12: Reshma Chhibha, *Unbridled* (2008), ed. of 5, Pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 60cm x 40cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.13: Reshma Chhibha, *Child Kali 1* (2009), ed. of 5, Pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 42cm x 29.7cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.14: Reshma Chhibha, *Linga-yoni* (2009), Installative sculpture: steel frame, comforel, sari, thread, cotton and nylon cord, 130cm x 47cm x 37cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.15: Reshma Chhibha, *Sublime Essence* (2013), Kumkum powder and thread on sari, 1m x 1.2m, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.16: Reshma Chhibha, *The Power of Time* (2013), ed. 1/5, Digital print on fibre paper, 136cm x 90cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.17: Reshma Chhibha, *The Unsatisfied Desire* (2013), ed. 1/5, Digital print on fibre paper, 136cm x 90cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.18: Reshma Chhibha, *Come Inside* (2013), Installation: Fabric, comforel, wool, batting, wood, swords, light, photographic print, sound, Approximately 12m deep x 3m wide x 2.5m high, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.19: Reshma Chhibha, *I am Kali, I am Black* (2013), ed. 1/5, Digital print on fibre paper, 81cm x 68.3cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.20: Reshma Chhibha, *I am Kali, I am Black* (2013), ed. 1/5, Digital print on fibre paper, 81cm x 68.3cm, Image courtesy of the artist

Fig.21: Reshma Chhibha and Anusha Pillay, *SHrEe* (2017), Performance at Gandhi Hall, Lenasia, Image courtesy of the artist